

**Executive Committee for Highway Safety
Older Driver Safety
Working Group Meeting Minutes – Mtg. #1
September 27, 2005**

Location:

NC AARP, Raleigh @ 10:00 a.m.

Committee Members in Attendance:

Jane Stutts	Phyllis Bridgman	Cliff Braam	Suzanne LaFollette-Black
Kathy Goff	Sarah Davis	Helen Savage	Rachel Hodge (for Janice Huff)
Bill Turner	Davis Fort	Carol Williams	
Susan Stewart	Kevin Lacy	David Munday	

Guest: Audrey Straight, AARP Public Policy Institute

Scribe:

Major David Munday

Minutes:

The meeting began at approximately 10:10 a.m. Jane Stutts welcomed those attending, noting that several new members had been invited to join the group. Everyone was asked to introduce themselves, saying a few words about their organizations and their interests in older driver safety.

Task I – Overview of NC Executive Committee for Highway Safety

As this group has been active for the past year and a half as an ad hoc NC Senior Driver Safety Coalition prior to being asked to serve as an official Working Group of the NC ECHS, Cliff Braam provided an overview of the ECHS and its activities. He provided copies of a recent newsletter summarizing the Committee's activities, also available on the ECHS web page (<http://www.ncdot.org/doh/preconstruct/traffic/ech/default.html>).

Cliff noted that almost a year of behind-the-scenes effort took place before the first meeting of the ECHS was convened in April 2003. Much of this time was spent bringing together key leadership of the many various agencies in the state concerned with highway safety. The ECHS is composed of 23 members, all high level representatives who can commit the resources of their respective agencies and organizations to reduce traffic crashes and injuries. The Committee meets quarterly under the direction of its Chair, David King, Deputy Secretary of NCDOT. Its primary responsibilities are to provide overall direction and administration to the State's efforts to implement its Strategic Highway Safety Plan. The ECHS identifies Working Groups to be formed to address various emphasis areas (there are altogether 22 emphasis areas identified in the SHSP, including the older driver as one of these), reviews and acts upon strategies recommended by the Working Groups, and coordinates efforts to implement those strategies, including seeking any required legislation..

Cliff briefly described the various Working Groups that have been established. They include groups to address the problems of lane departure, unlicensed drivers, aggressive driving (currently inactive), seat belt usage, drowsy and distracted driving, speed,

intersection collisions, and motorcycles, in addition to our own group to address older driver safety. A Public Information Working Group has also been established to help coordinate resources of all the involved agencies. Each working group is charged with identifying strategies for reducing crashes and improving safety in its particular area. Once a strategy is developed, it is presented to the Executive Committee which either (1) approves the strategy and sends it to an identified host agency for implementation, (2) sends it back to the Working Group for clarification or revision, or (3) puts it “on hold” until an appropriate time for action (e.g., if awaiting legislation or if an agency is already directing its resources towards another strategy).

There are no time constraints placed on a Working Group’s activities; rather, the ECHS monitors each Group to ensure that it is making progress. Cliff noted that North Carolina was unique in its approach to developing its statewide Strategic Highway Safety Plan. Rather than developing a static document, as has been the norm for other states, NC adopted the national SHSP as its working guide, but sees developing and implementing highway safety strategies as an ongoing, dynamic process. In doing so, NC hopes to reduce the fatality rate per million miles traveled from the current 1.66 to 1.0 by 2008. Cliff noted that this could be accomplished by reducing the absolute number of fatalities per year by 500, even as miles traveled will continue to increase.

Task II– Group Discussion

Cliff and Kevin then responded to questions from the group. The following issues were raised and discussed:

- Helen Savage asked Cliff to clarify the respective roles of the Executive Committee and the Working Groups. Who sets the agenda and identifies the focus areas for the Groups, e.g., highway design vs. driver education vs. transportation services? Cliff noted that the chairs were responsible for setting the agenda for their working group. The only constraint was that the overall focus be highway safety; otherwise, the Executive Committee maintains a “hands-off” approach to the activities of its Working Groups.
- Jane observed that not all of the agencies and organizations that might have some role to play in addressing safety and mobility issues of older adults were represented on the Executive Committee, for example, physicians who can help to identify at-risk older drivers, or the AARP, which offers its Driver Safety course. Should the Working Group limit its strategies to ones that might be more directly supported by the Executive Committee? Kevin responded that Working Groups were encouraged to take a broad, collaborative approach to addressing their problem area. All ideas should be brought to the table. In some cases, the ECHS may need to assign a strategy to an agency to identify a plan for getting the strategy implemented and obtain input from key stakeholders. Cliff also said that Working Groups could seek outside technical expertise in developing a particular strategy or area of focus, especially with regard to implementing the strategy.
- Dr. Fort asked about the possibility of obtaining increased funding for more alternative transportation for seniors. Kevin said that if this strategy was recommended by the Working Group and approved by the Executive Committee, then the Committee would look for ways to obtain needed funds, including reallocating existing resources within the DOT or seeking new funds, which might

require legislative action. Major Munday observed that the “top down” approach of the Executive Committee had proven very effective in enabling the Committee to follow through on its approved strategies.

- Suzanne asked whether the Coalition would be receiving a formal invitation and directives to serve as an ECHS Working Group. Cliff replied that he could ask for a formal invitation, but that the recommendation to have the Coalition serve as the basis for an Older Driver Working Group had been made and approved by the Executive Committee at its August meeting. He said that he could make available example strategies from the other Working Groups, which are not yet posted on the ECHS website pending legislative action. In addition, Cliff noted that there was some cross-pollination across Working Groups, for example, driver education has been addressed in several of the groups.
- Suzanne also asked whether any funds had been budgeted to support the activities of the Working Groups. Cliff responded that individual agencies were supporting their participation in the working groups, but that some funds were available for receipt-based agencies (such as the Highway Safety Research Center). Funding for program implementation can also sometimes be accomplished within existing agency structures and budgets, although if needed the Executive Committee will look for funding from legislation, grants, etc.

Task III – Guest Presentation

Audrey Straight, coordinator of older driver safety, mobility options, and livable communities programs at AARP in Washington, D.C., gave a Powerpoint presentation on Enhancing Mobility Options for Older Americans. In the presentation she noted that while cars are everyone’s preferred mode of transportation, health, income and unfriendly and unsafe driving environments can become barriers to driving as one ages. She went on to describe a number of steps that could be taken at the federal, state and local levels to enhance mobility options for older adults, including expanding awareness and understanding of the needs and preferences of older adults, forming community partnerships, advocacy, and creating volunteer programs in the community. Audrey noted that the strong coalition already in place in North Carolina could be a model for other states and offered her support to our efforts.

Task IV – Activity Update and Brainstorming on Potential Strategies

Following a break for lunch, hosted by AARP, the group reconvened to address the remaining two items on the agenda – to provide an update on activities of the two subcommittees of the SDSC, and to brainstorm about possible strategies that might be suggested by these activities. Kevin began by describing efforts of the roadway group, which have focused on identifying high risk crash locations for older drivers by looking at those intersections where there are both high numbers of older driver crashes and, more importantly, where a high proportion of the crashes involve older drivers. They then look for crash patterns characteristic of older drivers that might be amenable to roadway modifications. An example might be restricting left turns out of a shopping area in favor of a right turn followed by a U-turn at the next intersection. A potential strategy that might evolve from this activity is a recommendation that the state’s highway safety plan incorporate a process by which intersections (and perhaps roadway segments as well) are

routinely examined with respect to an overrepresentation of crashes involving older drivers.

Kevin and Dr. Fort also described their efforts to make freeway interchanges less problematical for older drivers. In particular, they had found that one design which is used relatively infrequently (a type of half cloverleaf) could be confusing with regard to which lane one needed to be in to access the freeway. In these locations, additional advance signage might be recommended to help not only older drivers, but all drivers. This finding might also serve as the basis for a strategy to reduce older driver crashes. In addition, an educational strategy might address roadway issues, for example, by encouraging older drivers to avoid left turns in favor of a series of right turns, or a right turn followed by a u-turn.

In some follow-up discussion by the group, Sarah noted that AAA was interested in examining some of the other high risk intersections on the list compiled by Kevin, and had also developed some information on licensed drivers by county which might be a useful in making comparisons across locations. It was suggested that another useful approach to examining the crash data might be to look at the proportion of crashes not involving local drivers. Carol also noted that the proliferation of signage can cause problems at intersections. These include not only DOT signage, but “non-sanctioned” signage such as realtor or political candidate signs. Here, enforcement of local ordinances was felt to be important.

Suzanne then provided an update on the activities of the Toolkit subcommittee, which actually encompasses three distinct efforts. First, the group is developing a toolkit of materials that will serve as the basis for a series of community mobility forums. The first forum will be held in Wilmington in November, with Fayetteville and Hendersonville identified as potential future forum sites. The goal of the forums will be to bring together key partners within the community to talk about mobility issues and to begin the process of identifying needs within their community and approaches for addressing these needs. The forums will draw upon AARP’s Livable Communities guide (http://www.aarp.org/research/housing-mobility/indliving/d18311_communities.html), and involve participants in using the surveys in the guide for assessing their community’s drivability, walkability, and mobility (i.e., availability and accessibility of alternative transportation). The Toolkit itself will contain such items as a Powerpoint presentation to encourage community interest in older adult safety and mobility, information on driver licensing and the medical review process, driver assessment resources, community assessment tools, information on alternative transportation, and a variety of educational materials and resources. Phyllis added that the Toolkit would help extend the level of public awareness of older driver safety issues from the state level to local communities.

The second activity of the Toolkit subcommittee described by Suzanne has been to develop an instruction module for DMV examiner in-service training focusing on the older driver. Training was originally to have taken place beginning in November, but has now been postponed until January. The group has been identifying and compiling material for the training, which will include information on how aging affects functional abilities important for safe driving and resources for assisting the older driver. The latter will include information about alternative transportation, local resources for comprehensive driver evaluation and training, and various educational materials for older

adults and their families (some of which are already being distributed at several DMV offices as part of a pilot test).

Finally, several members of the group will be leading a workshop at the NC Conference on Aging, October 19-21, entitled “Helping Older Adults Drive Safely, Longer.” This will be another opportunity for our group to engage communities in addressing the safety and mobility needs of older adults.

Although time did not allow further discussion of potential strategies for the Working Group, the subcommittees were encouraged to meet prior to the next full meeting of the group to develop a list of potential strategies, that could then be prioritized at the next meeting.

Before adjourning, Bill Turner asked for the Working Group’s support in recruiting new instructors for AARP’s Driver Safety Program. With the unveiling of the updated program, AARP is requiring that all of its instructors complete a two-day training course. As a result, it expects to lose up to a fourth of its current roster of 225 instructors. The curriculum will be offered at several locations throughout the state beginning in November. Interested persons should contact Bill at 910-799-1639 or wturnerwilm@bellsouth.net.

Action Items

Name	Item
Sub-committees	To meet prior to the next full meeting of the Working Group to identify a list of potential strategies. Keep Jane informed of progress.
Jane	Update Working Group roster and distribute along with minutes from the meeting.
All	Help with recruiting new instructors for AARP Driver Safety Course.

- The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:10 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: Monday, November 28, 2005, 10-12 at AARP offices in Raleigh.

Interested members are also invited to attend the Executive Committee for Highway Safety meeting on October 11 at 10 a.m. (contact Cliff for location and directions). Major Munday will be providing the update to ECHS members in Jane’s absence.